



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**For Immediate Release:**

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**EVENT: Sentencing**

**Defendant: Benjamin Benford, II**

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**FORMER RIVER ROUGE SCHOOLS OFFICIAL SENTENCED**

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Benjamin Benford II, an ex-Superintendent of the River Rouge Schools, age 56, was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment by United States District Judge Victoria Roberts, announced United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy. Mr. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Daniel D. Roberts, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Benford had previously pleaded guilty to Conspiracy to Interfere with Commerce by Extortion. In addition, Benford was ordered to pay \$23,305 in restitution to the victims of the extortion.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John Engstrom, who prosecuted the case, stated that, "the information presented to the court at the time of the plea and sentencing showed that between 1998 and 2002, the defendant was the Superintendent of the River Rouge School District and responsible for the annual evaluation of administrative employees. During that time period, Mr. Benford along with an administrative assistant, arranged for all administrative employees to pay him cash on Boss's Day, Christmas, his birthday, and around the time of school board elections. Depending upon the status of each employee, he/she would be expected to pay between \$30.00 and \$200.00 per event. Mr. Benford acknowledged that because of his position as Superintendent, his staff could reasonably believe that if the cash payments were not made, they might suffer some sort of economic harm."

In imposing the sentence, Judge Roberts characterized Benford's offense as "contemptible" and noted that it "should never have happened."

Mr. Murphy commended the agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for its investigation of the case which has led to several successful prosecutions.